

Secretary Rusk's News Conference of November 8

Press release 372 dated November 8

Secretary Rusk: I know you have many matters on your minds this morning; so I won't take your time with opening statements. I am ready for your questions.

Q. Mr. Secretary, the secrecy around the wheat negotiations with the Russians¹ is greater than usual. Your aides here in the Department, whose job has been to inform us, claim that they know nothing because they are not briefed. Now, this has been going on for weeks, and we believe we have a legitimate interest. Can you tell us how it stands?

A. Well, we are in a period in which the wheat problem is being discussed with the Soviet Union. There is a certain amount of bargaining going on. Obviously it is not in our interest to disclose the details of a bargaining situation. I wouldn't mind telling you gentlemen what the situation is if you would promise not to tell the Soviet Union the process of this bargaining.

But, as Mr. Khrushchev indicated yesterday, some progress has been made, but we don't know yet what the outcome will be. The President indicated in his last press conference that these matters ought to be left to the negotiators, and I would be content to leave it there for the time being. They are meeting this morning, and there may be other meetings, I don't know.

Q. Mr. Secretary, could you give us your appraisal of the situation now in Viet-Nam, since we have recognized it?² and what do you

see ahead in the future as to the impact on U.S. policy in Southeast Asia?

A. Well, I think the great question which has been in front of us all along has been how to get on with the main job of assuring that South Viet-Nam is secure and able to work out its own future under its own leadership and without any interference from the outside.

Now, we were very much concerned when in 1959 the Viet Cong, with public support from Hanoi, moved to interfere in South Viet-Nam and indeed threatened to take it over, and there has been steady growth in assistance and help by the United States and others to South Viet-Nam in that struggle.

We were also concerned in May and June and July of this year when developments in South Viet-Nam indicated that there was a growing gap between the government and the people of that country, and there was some danger that the solidarity of the country itself in meeting this threat would be undermined by differences within the country.

Now it is our hope that the political and the military leadership that has now formed a new government there in Viet-Nam will be able to rally the country, consolidate the effort, get on with the job, so that that country can be independent and free and secure.

As far as the United States is concerned, we do not have and have never had any special United States interest in terms of military bases or anything of that sort. Our primary concern with Viet-Nam is that it be secure and independent, as it is entitled to be, and we are hopeful now that there will be a consolidation of effort and that the central problem there will

¹ For background, see BULLETIN of Oct. 28, 1963, p. 630.

² See p. 818.

A. No, that is a matter which will be discussed. These are matters that are regularly discussed in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development]. Credit policies have been a matter of general coordination, not only as far as the Soviet bloc is concerned but also with regard to the free world. And I would suppose these matters would be discussed further. But I have nothing specific on that to say this morning.

Report of Soviet Arms to Algeria

Q. Mr. Secretary, it was reported that Soviet arms have been reaching Algeria from Cuba and from Egypt. Do you think that the Soviets are engaged here in a new gambit, or do you think it's an initiative of the Cuban and Egyptian Governments in supplying these weapons to Algeria?

A. The recent Algerian-Moroccan affair⁵ has underlined to us the importance of other countries, other powers, staying out of it. These two great Arab people, two Maghrebian people, ought to be able to resolve their problems between themselves and within an African framework. Now, any intrusion from the outside simply makes that more difficult and raises the possibility that still others might then come in and create a type of confrontation there which would be in the adverse interest of both peoples concerned.

I don't, myself, necessarily connect the Cuban ship with the particular incident that arose at the borders, because the timing of the departure of these supplies from Cuba apparently was such that it preceded the actual outburst of the fighting. It might have been related to other problems there of some other sort.

But I think it is very important that others keep out of that situation, so that these two countries can settle this affair between themselves and within the framework of the OAU [Organization of African Unity] arrangements that are now in progress. As you know, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OAU will be meeting on this matter. The Emperor of

Ethiopia and the President of Mali have played a very constructive role in it, and we hope very much that these two neighbors can get together and work out this situation.

Situation in Cuba

Q. Mr. Secretary, would you please assess the internal situation in Cuba and particularly the presence or removal of the Russian troops there?

A. I think there is nothing much to add to what the President said on that at his last press conference. There have been substantial withdrawals of Soviet military personnel in Cuba. I would not get into a numbers game again about the precise numbers, but we do know that there have been significant withdrawals.

We also know that the situation inside of Cuba is very tight, from the economic point of view; they are having considerable difficulties.

One of the things that worries us most about Cuba, about which we are concerned, is the continued effort of Mr. Castro to interfere in the affairs of other countries in this hemisphere, and the other countries and we are working very closely to meet this and to deal with it as it arises.

I am thinking, for example, of such things as that raid on the British island to recapture some refugees, whose only offense was they tried to escape the prison Mr. Castro has made out of Cuba.

I am thinking of the training of young men from other Latin American countries in terrorist and guerrilla tactics, with the idea that they would go back and engage in terrorist activities in their own countries.

I am thinking of such things as financial subsidies to terrorists in other countries.

These are things that are disturbing the peace of the Caribbean and the inter-American system, and that is one of the focal points of our attitude toward Cuba. It just will not be permitted to happen, and we are taking many different measures to interrupt this kind of interference.

Q. Mr. Secretary, thank you.

A. Thank you.

⁵ For text of a Department statement of Nov. 1, see *ibid.*, p. 757.